

1790
DISINTERESTED LOVE,

THE 397th

ORNAMENT

OF THE

CHRISTIAN,

AND THE

DUTY OF MAN.

A

S E R M O N

DELIVERED AT NEW-YORK,

JUNE 5, 1790; K.

By SAMUEL AUSTIN, A. M.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH OF CHRIST IN WORCESTER.

*And published in compliance with the request of a
number of the hearers,*

*“ They have made virtue so mercenary a thing,
“ and have talked so much of its rewards, that one
“ can hardly tell what there is in it, after all,
“ which is worth rewarding.”*

SHAFTSBURY.

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DISCONTINUED

THE

ORNAMENTAL

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MEMORIAL

DELIVERED AT NEW YORK

JUNE 3, 1850

BY SAMUEL AUGUSTUS

EDITOR OF A MONTHLY JOURNAL

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DISINTERESTED LOVE,

THE

DISTINGUISHING ORNAMENT

OF THE

CHRISTIAN,

AND THE DUTY OF MAN.

A SERMON.

PHIL. II. 4.

*Look not every Man on his own Things, but every
Man also on the Things of Others.*

THIS precept of the Apostle is plain, and being delivered under the authority of inspiration, is infinitely binding.

THE great duty which it teaches us, is, to regard with a benevolent affection, and to endeavour to promote with correspondent engagedness, the temporal, social, and spiritual interests of our fellow men. Though the precept does not prohibit a suitably subordinate care for our own welfare, so far as it can be consulted, in consistency with the claims of benevolence to others; it particularly inculcates, a disinterested

concern for, and suitable exertions to advance, as in itself a distinct, and desirable object, the good of others. For by the things of others is undoubtedly meant their good, comprising their external prosperity, their peace, reputation, social comfort, and whatever is absolutely valuable to them. This good of others, as in itself a valuable object, the Apostle directs us to consult. As the object is of a disinterested nature, the affection enjoined must be disinterested. From the text then, this doctrine may be fairly drawn, that

~~DISINTERESTED~~ love is at the foundation of the Christian character, and absolutely binding on all mankind.

In the prosecution of the discourse, I shall

I. ENDEAVOUR to give you an explanation of what is meant by Disinterested Love, by exhibiting its nature, and the manner in which it will operate and express itself.

II. PROVE the doctrine.

III. ATTEMPT to answer some objections which have been raised against it; and then close with an improvement.

I. I AM to give you an explanation of what is meant by Disinterested Love, by exhibiting its nature and the manner in which it will operate and express itself. The term disinterested is not found in the Scriptures. We however make use of it, to communicate an idea of that love, which our

text and many other passages of the Bible enjoin, because it more concisely, and more forcibly expresses that idea, than it can be expressed in any other manner.

DISINTERESTED love may be defined thus, It is a love to an object for what it is in itself; a disposition to consult and rejoice in its good, as an object, abstractly considered. It is a benevolent regard, which one being feels for the good and happiness of another, proportionate to its apparent intrinsic worth and importance, and is a rejoicing in, and seeking the good of that other, without any regard to personal benefit to be derived from it. Disinterested love is, in its peculiar nature the contrast of that which is interested.

INTERESTED love is a regard to a being merely on account of the benefits he confers, or which are expected from him: so that strictly and properly speaking the being is not loved but his benefits. In this, Satan supposed the love which Job appeared to exercise towards God consisted. Satan imagined that Job's dutiful respect to the **DEITY** was founded solely on the blessings with which God had favoured him, and that if those blessings should be withdrawn, and God should lay his hand heavy upon him, in a way of chastisement, Job's apparent love would become extinct, and his enmity rise to a flame. see Job 1.9. "Then

“ Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job
 “ fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an
 “ hedge about him and about his house, and
 “ about all that he hath on every side? Thou
 “ hast blessed the work of his hands and his sub-
 “ stance is increased on every side. But put forth
 “ thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and
 “ he will curse thee to thy face.” This represen-
 tation exhibits the love of Job as ultimately mer-
 cenary and selfish. Of this nature was that love,
 which influenced many of those who followed
 our Saviour when they attended him with pro-
 fessions of respect, not because they were really
 attached to Christ, or the interests of his king-
 dom, but because they found their own tempo-
 ral ends answered by following him. This is
 clearly intimated in what Christ said to them,
 “ Verily I say unto you, ye follow me not be-
 “ cause ye saw the miracles, but because ye
 “ did eat of the loaves and were filled.” This
 love Christ speaks of, as common to men in an
 unsanctified state. He tells us that “they love
 “ those who love them,” that they do good to
 those who do good to them, and lend to those,
 of whom they hope to receive as much again.
 Though they have a kind of love, it is not that
 genuine benevolent affection, which terminates
 in the good of others. It is of a sinister nature,
 and in all its operations and fruits has an ulti-

mate direction to self. All the views and aims of those whom it governs, center finally in self. Self is their God, their supreme object of regard, in whose service all their powers are employed, and their zeal exerted. This love does not refuse to embrace others, so far as they can be considered the instruments of its own gratification, and as subserving its own selfish schemes and wishes.

It may even lead the subjects of it to exercise some complacency in the Deity, so far as their imaginations represent him in a partial view, and they can consider him as the author of their pleasures and as invariably consulting their happiness. But it will go no farther.

ESSENTIALLY and widely different from this, is the disinterested love which we are endeavouring to delineate. Self is not its object or its end. It is an enlarged affection of heart, which looks at the good of others ultimately, and for itself; under the prevailing influence of which, the subject of it rejoices, in the existence, glory, and happiness of God; in the existence, exaltation and felicity of inferiour intelligents; and in all the blessedness which is shed abroad, or is yet to be extended through the universe. Influenced by this love, he rejoices in the triumphs of redeeming grace, wishes for the best good of all around him, even of his bitterest enemies,

and feels a sensible pleasure in every instance of the advancement of their temporal, social, and spiritual interests, without taking into consideration any supposed good to be derived from thence to himself. Indeed so ardently does he desire, and so highly does he value this good of the Derry and of his fellow creatures, that he takes his chief satisfaction in it. And so far is he from regarding others as only subservient to his own interests, that he is willing to give up his own interest for the greater good of others. In every bosom, in which this love has the ascendancy, it will operate and express itself in a conscientious obedience to all duty, at the hazard of reputation, property, and life.

WITH respect to God the supreme object of it, it will operate in a cordial complacency in his character as in itself infinitely amiable and excellent. For a benevolent creature cannot but love a being perfectly benevolent, and *GOD is Love*. It will operate in a sincere veneration of the divine government as a government uniformly equitable, and embracing in its nature and issue the most noble and benevolent objects. Viewing the divine administration as a system of holiness, and conspiring to secure the greatest glory and happiness of the intelligent creation, the benevolent subject of this love will frequently, and devoutly adopt the language of inspiration,

“ The Lord reigneth let the earth rejoice, let
 “ the multitude of the isles be glad thereof,” and
 join the rapturous song of the Redeemed, “ Alle-
 “ luiah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

THIS love will operate in an acquiescence in
 the decrees of GOD; in the providential allot-
 ments of God, and make the happy subject of it
 willing to be in the hand of God, as clay in
 the hand of the Potter. For if the divine go-
 vernment in its execution, be a proper object
 of benevolent acquiescence and joy, then it must
 reflect higher honour upon the Deity, to have
 planned it from Eternity, than to have stumbled
 upon it by any fortunate contingency. And if
 God be infinitely lovely, as a holy and benevolent
 Being, then it must be grateful to every good
 man, that all things are at his disposal.

FURTHER, this love will lead the subject of
 it to subscribe to the divine laws, as holy, just,
 and good; because they are calculated not only
 to secure the greatest good of the universe, but
 the temporal and eternal happiness of every one
 who obeys them.

THE man who is under the influence of this
 disinterested affection, will embrace objects ac-
 cording to their worth and importance. He will
 seek the divine glory as dearer to him than any
 of his own interests. He will be cheerfully dis-
 posed to consecrate his all to this glorious ob-
 ject.

ject, and to lay himself, with all his interests for time and for eternity at the feet of his Maker; and if his own welfare interfere with the great and benevolent ends of the divine government, he will be willing to sacrifice so small a trifle, rather than those ends should be frustrated.

THIS love will express itself in the outward obedience of a pious and useful life. He in whose bosom it reigns, will endeavour to honour God by an adherence to his worship, his institutions and cause at whatever expence. He will be strictly careful to refrain from all acts of impiety as dishonourary to God, and injurious in their tendency. He will ardently pray for, and by actual exertion endeavour to be instrumental in the advancement of the Gospel of the Son of God, as a system of grace and happiness; and nothing will give him so much pleasure, as to hear of the conversion of souls, and the progress of grace in the hearts of men.

TOWARDS men, this love reigning in the heart of a true christian, will be a fountain of beneficent actions. It will incline him to acts of forbearance and forgiveness towards his enemies, to be tender of the reputation, peace and outward prosperity of all those with whom he is associated in domestic and civil society, or in the bonds of the Gospel, and to maintain a harmless

deportment. It will not prompt him to reproach and calumny. It will not allow him to wish to build up his own temporal interests on the ruin of the reputation or property of another. He will consider the peace and social happiness of his neighbour as dear to him, and will be solicitous not to disturb them. He will be happy to see them promoted and will rather suffer himself than be the instrument of his suffering.

FARTHER, he will be active in positive exertions to do good. His hand will be open to relieve the distressed. The hungry, the naked, the widow and the orphan; the family of sickness and affliction, will be the objects of his tenderness and charity. He will sympathize with them under their affliction, and it will afford him solid satisfaction to contribute to their relief. He will love the pleasing condescension of communicating council or instruction to them, or in any way promoting their felicity. The good of the public, of useful societies, and institutions he will endeavour to advance; and above all, the eternal salvation of his fellow creatures, as that is by far the most important of all other social objects, and in itself infinitely desirable, he will ardently pray for, and to this will his exertions, his counsels, his persuasions and his example be chiefly directed.

If it should be asked whether this love to others,

and regard to their welfare, does not connect with it sensible pleasure, and whether therefore it can be properly termed a disinterested affection?

I would answer. There can be no question, but that the love which we have been describing, brings with it, its own reward. It essentially involves in it a pleasure of the most exalted kind. There is a solid joy attending it, which is undescribably sweet. Yea, the benevolent man's happiness lies in the happiness of others, and the more his heart expands with the love of God and his fellow creatures, the more happy he is. But this is the *effect* of the affection; not the *motive* or *object* of it. The good man does not seek his neighbour's happiness that he may enjoy the pleasure of seeking it. This would be contradictory. For, were this the case, his neighbour would not be loved at all in fact, only as an instrument of his pleasure. Disinterested love terminates not in personal enjoyment, but in the good of others. The man who is the subject of it, regards the good and happiness of others ultimately. And though he feels the most sensible pleasure in the exercise of his affection, and though it conduces directly to the security of his highest present and eternal interests, this is by no means the motive or object of it, but its spontaneous effect and

fruit. And when we speak of disinterested love, we have reference merely to the object.

If any should ask still farther, whether by disinterested love be meant, such an entire and abstracted regard to the good of others, as implies a total disregard to, and indifference about our own good?

It may be answered, that disinterested love, strictly speaking, has no ultimate respect whatever to self, as self; But while we contend for this, we do not mean to contend for it, to the total exclusion of all regard to our own private good. A subordinate, an impartial, a disinterested concern for our own happiness, is consistent with a disinterested and superior regard to the greater good of others, and disinterested love will not give up or disregard the former when it can be consulted in consistency with the latter. Disinterested love, being absolutely impartial in its nature, cannot lead a man to an indifferency respecting his own private happiness, but to value it, just as he would the happiness of another in similar circumstances, and just as another person, disconnected from him, and viewing things impartially, would value it. And there can be no doubt but that saints and angels in heaven, who exercise a perfectly disinterested and supreme regard to the glory of God, and the good of other intelligents, have also at the same time a real,

though a perfectly impartial, subordinate, and vastly inferior value for their own happiness.* Subordinate, I say, for disinterested love will never allow private, personal interests to interfere with the public, and more extensive good.

HAVING briefly shown you what is meant by disinterested love, and illustrated the manner in which it will operate and express itself. I proceed

II. To prove the doctrine, that such disinterested love is at the foundation of the christian character and absolutely binding on all mankind.

THIS part of the subject, seems to divide itself into two branches.

I. LET us consider the proof which may be produced to evince, that disinterested love is at the foundation of the christian character. When I say it is at the foundation of the christian character, I mean, that it is essential to all evangelical obedience, so that without it there can be no genuine renovation of nature, or any saving conformity to the the Gospel. And in proof of this proposition, let it be observed,

* Hence the manner of expression which the Apostle uses in the text. "But every man *also* on the things of others," is so far from militating as some insinuate, against the doctrine of disinterested love, that it rather corroborates it. For while it implicitly teaches, that it is our duty to entertain a due regard to our own happiness, it teaches, that that regard must be impartial or disinterested, so as to admit a due benevolence to others.

I. THAT disinterested love is the love which the sum of the moral law requires. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." In this summary view of the moral law, the objects of love are, God, and our neighbour. In them our love is to terminate. They are to be loved ultimately as objects in themselves considered, disconnected from any selfish interests of ours, and without any considerations whether that love in its nature or issue will conduce to our own personal benefit or not. The command is unconditional and positive, in no measure suspended on the condition of its contributing to our advantage. And if the affection required, did not produce to us the least degree of enjoyment for the present, or if there were no promises of future reward made to it, the command would still be absolutely binding.

It cannot be supposed that this command obliges us to love God only so far as he administers to our enjoyment; and that the moment he counteracts our happiness, even though it be in perfect justice, he forfeits all claim to our affection: This would, even by divine constitution make self, the supreme and ultimate object of regard. This would make us respect the Duty only as subservient to our wishes, and would be

a requisition of no love to him at all. It would totally preclude on his part all claim to supreme homage, and complacency.

NOR can it be supposed that the command obliging us to love our *neighbour*, has an ultimate reference to our own happiness, and is suspended on the condition of its conducing to it. This would involve a similar absurdity. God and our neighbour are therefore the express and ultimate objects, to whom our love is directed in this summary of the divine law. And the reason of this is obvious.

WE are under infinite obligations to love the blessed God for what he is in himself, on account of the infinite worth of his existence, glory, and happiness; and the infinite amiableness of his character. So absolutely perfect, excellent; and amiable is that assemblage of divine attributes, with which the Deity is clothed; so altogether equitable and benevolent his government, and so wise his laws and dispensations, that it is impossible but that every intelligent creature, be his personal circumstances and prospects what they may; should be under obligations to love him with all their powers, and to rejoice in him as God over all blessed for ever.

AND we cannot but be bound to love our neighbour, and in the exercise of that love to seek his welfare; because his existence and hap-

pineness are in themselves of great worth and importance.

DISINTERESTED love then, is the love which the moral law summarily requires. It is the essence of holiness and of all obedience. But the scripture expressly assures us, "that *without* holiness no man can see the Lord;" That it is vain to call Christ Lord, Lord, while we do not the things which he requires; that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and that those who are peculiarly God's people, have his law put into their hearts. The undeniable consequence is, that disinterested love is at the foundation of the christian character.

II. THE son of God has decidedly made the possession of his spirit, and an imitation of his example, not only our duty, but absolutely essential to our saving interest in him. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, *as I have loved you*, and he that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and *they follow me*" Hence the apostolic exhortation "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ." From these passages we are evidently taught, that all those who yield any true obedience to the Gospel, and are savingly interested in its blef-

things are, in a measure, under the government of the same temper, aims and affections, which actuated Christ.

BUT will any man pretend that self was the end of all our Saviour's illustrious actions? Will any man presume to say, that in his incarnation, self-denial, acts of beneficence, and submission to the agonies of the cross, he was self-interested? That in this astonishing exhibition of love and goodness, he ultimately regarded selfish objects? What advantages could that divine personage possibly obtain, who was in the eternal, independent, and immutable possession of all glory and blessedness? What interested ends could he possibly have in view, who was the sovereign proprietor of heaven and earth, the eternal fountain of good; by whose agency all creatures are every moment sustained, and on whose providence and beneficence they are absolutely dependent? What say the scriptures? "For our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich." *This is love*, love of the purest, and most impartial nature, "not that we have loved God, but that he hath loved us, and sent his son to die for us." "for the love of Christ constraineth us, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? The son of man came to seek and save that which was lost." Now was all this love a mere

selfish affection? Is it selfishness which we venerate in this divine Philanthropist? No. It is a fervent charity of heart, which sought not its own. It is the charming dignity of an unfeigned, and spontaneous benevolence, totally removed from any thing of a selfish nature; a benevolence stronger than death, and which sustained the illustrious sufferer, through such a scene of humiliation, as the universe never beheld. Attend candidly to the mere language of these passages, and you cannot, you will not dispute it. Consider the aspect of his life, and the history of his atonement. Give impartial credit to the testimony of inspired truth, and you will acknowledge that it was an ardent, disinterested love, which ultimately respected his father's honour, the happiness of the universe, and the salvation of precious souls, which carried the divine Jesus to mount Calvary, which has gone with him to heaven, and which will for ever burn in his bosom, as a perpetual and inextinguishable flame.

Now as the members must be of the same nature with the head, as the branches must partake of the essential qualities of the vine, the consequence follows, that disinterested love is at the foundation of the Christian character, and essential to all saving conformity to the Gospel.

III. THE examples of the Apostles, may be produced as additional testimony in demonstration of the doctrine before us. The Apostles expressed in their public preaching, and the leading actions of their lives, not a sordid, narrow selfishness, which ultimately respected their own interests either temporal or eternal; but a disinterested regard to the honour of their master, and the highest happiness of their fellow men. That they were under the government of this noble propensity of soul, they gave undeniable proof, in their voluntary renunciation of their worldly ease and temporal prospects, and their uniform submission to every kind of sufferings, for the furtherance of the Gospel. Hence says St. Paul, "We seek not yours but you." and again, "Even as I please all men, in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Now holiness is the same throughout every part of the universe. The spirit of Christ's kingdom is but one. This only is the proper basis of that union spoken of by Christ, "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, that they also may be one in us, I in them, and thou in me, that they also may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Is not here then, my brethren, unques-

tionable proof of the proposition before us?

IV. FARTHER evidence in support of the doctrine, that disinterested love is essential to the christian character, may be produced from many passages of scripture, which explicitly establish it. To this purpose, you will suffer me to request your attention to the following. Matt. v. 44. "But I say unto you, love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Luke vi. 31. "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have you? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye lend to those of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, *hoping for nothing again*, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest, for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil."

THE love here enjoined, as constituting the distinguishing character of Christ's disciples, is certainly of a disinterested nature. Self-interest is not the spring of it. We are enjoined to do good without any respect to personal advantage, from a mere principle of loving to do good,

even to those whom our selfish affections naturally prompt us to hate and injure. And lest we should imagine that this love was not essential to the christian character, Christ repeatedly assures us, that if we have it not, and do not act from the influence of it, we are no better than publicans and sinners. Correspondent to which, are the words of Christ. Luke 14. 26. "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." i. e. If a man have not that disinterested love to me and my kingdom, which shall dispose him to a voluntary sacrifice of his own private interests for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, he belongs to the kingdom of my great enemy, and cannot be admitted to a share in those blessings, which I will bestow on all, who truly take up their cross, and follow me. To the same import, and enjoining the same thing, are the words of the Apostle. 1 Cor. 10. 24. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." In the same manner he speaks of that charity, the nature of which he particularly delineates in 1 Cor. 13 ch. and of which he says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I

“could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing;” and, which he says in another place, “is the fulfilling of the law;” of this charity, he gives this distinguishing characteristic, “she seeketh not her own.” Hence he reprobates the opposite principle of sinners, as repugnant to the spirit of Christianity. “For I have no man,” says he in his epistle to the Ephesians. “like-minded, who will naturally care for your state, for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.”

ADDRESSING his son Timothy on the perilous times that were to come, he speaks of this, as one of the greatest evils that should attend them, “For men shall be lovers of their own selves.” I need not comment on these passages, because they expressly teach the doctrine we are now supporting. They unequivocally assert, that disinterested love is at the foundation of the christian character, or they teach nothing, they are perfectly unintelligible, and nothing can be understood from the sacred volume.

BUT it is time for me to proceed to the other branch of the doctrine, and to show that disinterested love is binding on all mankind.

AFTER what has been advanced to prove, that it is essential to the christian character, much need not be said to demonstrate, that as the essence of duty, it is obligatory upon men of all descriptions. For surely, all mankind are bound to the same obedience, which the true christian renders. If disinterested love was the actuating principle in the Redeemer of the world, if it was the grand impelling affection in the inspired Apostles, and if it was taught to Christ's followers, by such numerous precepts, as *that* charity without which they could be nothing, then its universal obligation is indubitable.

BUT that it may be rendered, if possible, still more indisputable, suffer me to make some additional observations from the nature of things, and from the express commands of God respecting it.

I. It is obvious from the nature of things, that all mankind are bound to exercise this disinterested love, and to act in all the transactions of life from the governing influence of it. Can it be reasonable that self should be the object of our supreme and ultimate regard? Can it be right that all our solicitude and concern should center on mere personal interests? Can it be just for us to view our little selves as of such mighty importance, as to entertain no re-

gard for other beings, only as they contribute to our felicity, and are subservient to our purposes? What are we! creatures of a day, whose breath is in our nostrils, who hang upon our Makers energy; what are we, that we should be the sole objects of our own regard? Of what little comparative consequence are we and our interests, in the scale of being? What mighty loss would the Universe sustain if we were struck out of it? Is not the existence and glory of God, of infinitely more worth and value, than any interests of ours? Is not the good, the happiness of the moral Creation of far, yea, of inconceivably greater consequence than ours? And is not the happiness of an individual of our fellow creatures, of as much worth as our own happiness? For a man then to love himself supremely and solely, is it not to make an idol of self, and to raise himself in his own views and esteem, far above the infinite Creator, and the hosts of intelligent creatures? Is it not in effect to place all beings as prostrate at his own feet? And what is this, but a wicked, base contempt of the infinite God, and other beings, repugnant to the plainest dictates of reason and common sense!

EVERY object deserves love and regard in proportion to its intrinsic worth and excellence. Hence the Deity has a claim to more regard than the whole Universe of creatures. And the good of the collective body of intelligent creatures, is of vastly more worth and importance than ours. And the existence and happiness of a fellow creature, being of as much worth and importance, have a claim to as much benevolent regard. It is this disinterested benevolence, this ardent diffusive love my brethren, which links holy beings in heaven together, into one perfect harmonious whole. Were self-

ishness to reign among them, it would produce universal jar, animosity, and ruin. It is a base narrow selfishness, which is at the foundation of the wars, tumults, rivalships, envying, and bickering of the present sinful world. Were men to consult the good and happiness of each other as much as they do their own, the felicity of paradise would be restored. Selfishness then, is the subversion of all order, propriety and happiness.

BUT that all men are under obligations to exercise this disinterested affection to other beings, is put out of all dispute by the particular, and peremptory injunctions of the Deity. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." This is the summary of the divine law, given by the authority of God, and enforced by the most awful sanctions. And it has been shown that disinterested love is the love here enjoined. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." These are express commands of the living God. They enjoin the love we have been describing, and "curst be he whosoever continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

I AM now to answer one or two objections to the foregoing doctrines.

I. The passage of the Apostle in Heb. xii. 2. is sometimes mentioned as an objection to the doctrine of disinterested love, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The objection from this passage

supposeth, that the joy which was set before Christ was an interested object; that it was an additional joy, or felicity, to which as a personal acquisition, he had ultimate respect. It supposeth that the great end, which Christ had in view was his own advantage, the advancement of his own happiness. But is it true, that the son of God was influenced, ultimately by selfish motives, in that scene of humiliation and sufferings, which Christians are wont to contemplate with so much admiration? Was this the nature of that joy which was set before Christ? Was it mere personal enjoyment? Was it not on the other hand a *benevolent joy*, the joy of seeing, as the result of his sufferings and death, his Father eminently and eternally glorified; was it not the joy of seeing the empire of happiness extended, the blessedness of the universe augmented, and millions of precious souls delivered from sin and endless torments, and raised to the enjoyment of immortal glory? Well might the benevolent heart of Christ rejoice in the prospect of this inconceivable good. This I venture to say was the joy which was set before Christ. This it was which made him so nobly endure the cross, and despise the shame. It was a joy purely disinterested. And for any one to say, that it was what the objection supposeth, that Christ was ultimately selfish, in his submission to death, is to advance a position, which militates with all the representations of the Gospel, which obscures the glory of the Saviour, and perverts one of the noblest passages in the sacred volume.

II. Another objection to the doctrine of disinterested love, is drawn from what is said of Moses in the xi Chap. of Hebrews 26 verse, "Esteeming
" the reproach of Christ greater riches, than the
" treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the re-
" compence of the reward. The objection raised

from this passage supposeth, that the words, *for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward*, intimate, that Moses in his renunciation of the dignities of the Egyptian Court, and subjection of himself, to the hardships of the wilderness, for the cause of God and his people, was actuated merely by a prospect of gain. But was it personal good which this good man had ultimately in view? Let us not dishonour the venerable prophet by groundless constructions of the sacred text.

WHAT is the nature of the reward with which the righteous are to be finally recompensed, and which was set before this good man? It essentially consists beyond dispute, in the perfect dominion of holy love, in a compleat moral conformity to the blessed God. But this love, this conformity, as hath been shown is of a disinterested nature. It is not selfish, but has the existence, glory and happiness of God, and of the universe of creatures, for its ultimate objects. But can a creature have cordial respect to an object which is not congenial to his present feelings? If he is now selfish in his aims, and affections, can he be willing to subject himself to present sufferings through the hope of attaining to a state in which his selfish feelings will become totally extinct, and in which he will be the subject of a perfectly disinterested holiness? Is it possible for a fallen creature, who is altogether selfish in his exercises, to be willing to go through a scene of trying difficulties, in hope of being at the close of them disinterestedly holy, or the subject of that charity which seeketh not her own? The idea is totally contradictory and absurd. If then the view which has been given in this discourse, be just, there is no weight in the objection. The respect which Moses had to the recompence of reward, was a disinterested exercise. The character of Moses,

as it is delineated in the holy Bible, is of so uniformly a disinterested complexion, that it of itself fully refutes the objection without any comment.

I shall now close what has been said with an
IMPROVEMENT.

I. From what has been exhibited we infer, that those are guilty of a great and very pernicious error, who deny the existence of disinterested love, and our obligations to the exercise of it.

FROM what has been advanced in this discourse, it is obvious ; that disinterested love is the substance of all duty, and of all moral beauty. It is the fulfilling of the first, and second commandments of the law. It is the great bond of harmony and happiness in the heavenly world, and without it, there cannot possibly exist in the heart of man, any real conformity to that glorious example of love and goodness, which is set us in the Gospel. Those therefore who deny this, as essential to the christian character, and binding on every man, do in effect deny all religion, they take the part of infidelity, and convert the whole glorious system of Gospel duty into a scheme of mere selfishness.

II. From our subject we learn, that human depravity is radically founded in selfishness. Disinterested love is the substance of that holiness which is required of us. Of course selfishness must be the substance of that rebellion for which we are condemned. This is the idolatry which God will punish with inextinguishable burnings. Sinners hate God because he stands in the way of their selfish propensities ; because he will not let the wicked go unpunished. They hate his government and laws ; because they care for nothing but their own selfish objects, and because the government and laws of God clash with those objects. And if we will impartially examine the principles of human

intercourse, we shall find that selfishness is the foundation of all those moral disorders, which disturb society. Men are envious, revengful, covetous, fraudulent, treacherous, thievish, debauched, because they love their own interests, and pleasures more than the reputation, peace and happiness of their neighbours.

III. OUR subject affords this inference, that all external performances of a religious aspect, which result from motives of selfishness, constitute no real obedience, and do not enter into the nature of that holiness, without which no man shall see God. If on the supposition of being destitute of that charity which seeketh not her own, St. Paul could say, though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, I am nothing. And though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and my body to be burned, it profiteth me nothing; then certainly, whatever external performances result not from this principle within, are mere dross, and no proper or acceptable compliance with the divine law whatever.

If a man should serve his country with ever so much external diligence and activity, though his service in itself might essentially contribute to the public good; yet, if it all were the result of selfishness and dictated by motives of self-interest, not by a superiour regard to the divine glory and the good of men, it would be nothing in the divine account. Were a man to contribute ever so largely to the relief of the distressed, yet if it be done through an ultimate regard to his own private ends, and not from disinterested motives, it would be nothing. Hence says Christ, "When thou doest thine
" alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as

“ the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in
 “ the corners of the streets, that they may have
 “ glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They
 “ have their reward. But when thou dost alms,
 “ let not thy left hand know what thy right
 “ hand doth.” If men externally fast and pray
 ever so constantly, yet if self is the spring of
 their apparent duty, it enters not into the nature
 of obedience. Therefore says the apostle James,
 “ Ye ask and ye receive not, because ye ask
 “ amiss, that ye may consume it upon your
 “ lusts.” Hence the precept, “ Whether there-
 “ fore, ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do
 “ all to the glory of God.”

IV. Our subject teaches us, that the thou-
 sand years reign of Christ on earth, in the emi-
 nent enlargement and glory of the Church, pre-
 dicted by scripture prophecy, will be attended
 with unspeakable glory and happiness. Inspired
 truth predicts, that the earth shall be full of the
 knowledge of the Lord, even as the waters co-
 ver the sea; that the time shall come, when
 Satan shall be bound for a thousand years, and
 not be suffered to deceive the nations any more till
 those thousand years shall be fulfilled; when the
 kingdoms of this world, shall become the kingdom
 of our Lord, and Saviour Jesus Christ; when many
 shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increas-
 ed; and when all shall know God, from the great-
 est unto the least; and the nations of the world shall
 beat their swords into plough-shares, and their
 spears into pruning hooks, and shall learn war no
 more. Such a blessed period has not yet gladden-
 ed this sinful distracted world. It is therefore yet to
 come. It is advancing as fast as the wheels of
 time roll round, and probably it is not far distant.
 What glory my brethern will distinguish this illu-

trious scene ! Here will be the reign of holiness, and holiness is love. Disinterested love will here erect her throne, and extend her benign and salutary way. The selfish propensities will give way to the milder and more peaceful influence of impartial affection. Hence frauds, treacheries and rapine will cease, and mankind will live together as brethren, anticipating in the grateful fervour of their love to God and one another, the undisturbed felicity of that world, where love will be perfect and interminable.

V. Let me close, by calling upon you all, my christian brethern and fellow sinners, in the name of that God who is love, to exercise and uniformly to act from the influence of that love which is the fulfilling of the law. If ye live destitute of this holy affection, as the supreme and governing principle of your souls, ye will be cumberers of the ground, ye will live under the curse of your maker, and at last lie down in sorrow. If that charity which seeketh not her own have the ascendancy in your hearts, and transfuse itself in your lives, ye will resemble the divine Philanthropist, who died for us. You will live usefully and happily; you will leave the world in triumph, and heaven will be your residence forever. Now to God only wise and our Saviour, be glory and dominion Amen.

FINIS.

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